Tasmanian Field Naturalists Club Inc.

BULLETIN

Editor: Geoff Fenton EMAILfenton@southcom.com.au

Quarterly Bulletin **No 328** **Oct 2007**

The Tasmanian Field Naturalists Club encourages the study of natural history and supports conservation. People of any age and background are welcome as members.

For further information, visit our website **http://www.tasfieldnats.org.au**; write to GPO Box 68, Hobart, 7001; or phone our president, Janet Fenton, on (03) 6239 6443.

Program

General Meetings start at 7:45pm on the first Thursday of the month, in the Life Science Building at the University of Tasmania. Outings are usually held the following weekend, meeting outside the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery entrance in Macquarie Street. Bring lunch and all-weather outdoor gear.

If you are planning to attend an outing but have not been to the prior meeting, please check details. Phone Janet Fenton (03) 6239 6443 as unforeseen changes sometimes occur.

Thu, 1 Nov	Meeting 7.45pm in Life Sciences building, University of Tas. Ecologist and TFNC member Mark Wapstra will tell us about the rare *Thismia rodwayi*.
Sat, 3 Nov	Excursion with Mark, looking for *Thismia* at New Rd, Franklin, in the Huon Valley. Meet at 9.00am outside the Tas Museum, Macquarie St, Hobart, and rendezvous again at 10.00am at the start of New Rd in the centre of Franklin township. Bring lunch.
16~18 Nov	Federation bi-annual get-together for members of Tasmania's field naturalist clubs. To be held at Bicheno on the east coast, with excursions to Winifred Curtis Reserve and Douglas Apsley NP. Please see article in this Bulletin.
Thu, 6 Dec	Meeting 7.45pm in Life Sciences building, University of Tas. As this is the last meeting for the year, it will be Member's Night and various members will give short presentations on recent events and topics of interest.
Sat, 8 Dec	End of year barbeque at 'Aberdale', Longley.

There will be no meeting in January; the first meeting in 2008 will be on Thursday, 7 February.

Wedge-tailed eagles— Lucaston, 5 Aug 2007

Excursion report by Neil Klaer

Our monthly excursion for August was to Bill Brown's property at Lucaston to see his Tasmanian wedge-tailed eagles (*Aquila audax fleayi*). Bill works for the Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment and is responsible for the wedge-tail eagle recovery plan. At his property he has built a cage 20m x 10m x 4m high to rehabilitate injured eagles for later release back into the wild. The excursion was very well attended with about 30 members and family and friends keen to see our largest eagle up close. The Tasmanian wedge-tail is listed as *critically endangered* by the IUCN, as *endangered* by the Commonwealth government, and as *vulnerable* by the Tasmanian government.

There were two eagles in the main cage, which is large to allow the eagles some room to fly and to exercise in preparation for release. They did make small flights, but also seemed to be a little nervous with all those people looking at them and taking photos. Bill collects road kill for food for the eagles, and he put a dead pademelon into the cage in the hope they would feed – again they were a bit too unsettled by the attention to eat. One of the eagles has been dubbed Icarus as its wing feathers were burned at 7 weeks of age, not from flying too close to the sun, but from a fire at Scottsdale that burned its nest. The mythological Icarus was male, but it was later discovered that this eagle Icarus was female and is now 2 years of age, and healthy, although still has not fully recovered her wing feathers. Although Icarus has been in captivity for a long time, she is still wild – Bill has difficulty catching her when he needs to. The other eagle in the large cage was an adult found at Lonnavale and had a broken "wrist" in its wing. It was not recovering well, and indications were that it would never fly again.

A third adult eagle was in a smaller cage in isolation because it didn't seem to be feeding well when with the other eagles. This one came from the southern midlands and showed symptoms of neurological damage such as occasionally arching its neck backwards and swaying its head from side to side. It had probably been poisoned.

There is a pair of wild local eagles with their youngster, hatched in 2005, that often visit the recovering eagles and perch on the outside of their cage. Their perching place was well marked by their characteristic chalky droppings and also pellets on the ground. Bill explained that eagles produce pellets in the same way as owls, but can also digest bones, which explains the large amount of calcium in the droppings.

Since our excursion the eagle with the broken wing was euthanased, but the other two are doing well.

Lucaston additional report [Kevin Bonham]

About twelve of us went for a brief walk down-hill from Bill's property on Mt Ruddy through some cut-over damp eucalypt forest on sandstone (and locally, dolerite). It was rather cold and rainy and we didn't go far.

Invertebrates seen included the snail *Caryodes dufresnii*, the millipedes *Australeuma jeekeli* and *Asphalidesmus parvus*, the large blue-black carabid beetle *Rhabdotus reflexus* and a velvetworm (*Ooperipatellus sp.*). The velvetworm was rather inactive.

Many orchids were in leaf but none in flower.

Milles Track and Disappearing Tarn

Excursion, Saturday 8 Sep 2007 - report by Janet Fenton

We are so fortunate to have a paradise such as Mount Wellington virtually on the doorstep, especially in springtime. Seven 'field nats' took advantage of the balmy weather and set forth from The Springs along Milles Track.

Canal work to capture water on the mountain began early in Hobart's history. In 1825, convict labour was used to channel water into the Hobart Rivulet near Milles track. In 1845 a track financed by public donations was built to Wellington Falls.

Mount Wellington has always been a favourite 'hunting ground' of the TFNC. Gilbert commented on how much more open the vista from Milles Track used to be four decades ago. Now there is almost a closed canopy of shrubs such as *Richea dracophylla* (coming gorgeously into flower), teatree, *Eucalyptus urnigera* and some rainforest species such as myrtle and sassafras, which have reestablished since the bushfires of 1967. This was by no means the first devastating fire on Mount Wellington during Hobart's history. The Mount Wellington Park Management Trust website lists previous severe fires burning large tracts of the mountain in 1851, 1897, 1934, 1937 and 1945!

We noted a *Pterostylis* in flower and *Olearia persoonioides* with its shining dark green leaves. We were interested to see specimens of *Brachyglottis brunonis* (a shrub restricted in distribution to the Wellington Range and a few adjacent hills) with dead lower branches in the shrubby areas, looking as if they may be suffering from competition. Healthier specimens were conspicuous on areas of more sparsely vegetated

dolerite scree. Other plants of interest were *Leptcophylla juniperina* ssp *parvifolia*, *Olearia phlogopappa*, *Cyathodes glauca*, *Orites diversifolia*, and *Correa lawrenceana*.

We followed Milles Track around the flank of the mountain, continuing along the Wellington Falls track and admiring *Hakea lissosperma* and *Pittosporum bicolor* in flower along the way.

Disappearing Tarn was our lunch spot. This is a deep depression in an open boulder field. Clay silts have collected in the bottom, with the result that after heavy rain or snow melt, water can be slow to percolate away between the boulders, and the 'tarn' fills up temporarily. On the day of our outing only a little water could be discerned down between some of the boulders. A few patches of snow still lurked in the hollow, which was distinctly colder than the surrounding boulder field. Crevices between the boulders harboured interesting little moss gardens.

Apart from the stunning views of distant silver wattle in full bloom and the cacophony of crescent honey-eaters making us all feel jolly, the highlight of the day was Kevin's quest for the silky snail, as he tells…

Snail Report [Kevin Bonham]

Milles Track is a known hotspot of sorts for the Rare-listed silky snail (*Roblinella agnewi*), which is only known from the eastern face of Mt Wellington where it mainly lives in dolerite scree. After about an hour I found a dead specimen about a kilometre into the walk, and was delighted to find a live adult nearby - only the fourth live specimen I've seen, and the first chance to photograph the species alive. More was to come with another dead specimen, again soon followed by a live one, near Disappearing Tarn, almost doubling the species' known east-west range. The second live specimen was next to an adult of the very carnivorous *Tasmaphena sinclairi*, but it wasn't clear whether the latter was trying to eat it.

The silky snails weren't the only significant find as I also recorded *Prolesophanta dyeri* which I have never seen on Mt Wellington before in around 100 hours' sampling (nearest records: Dora Falls and Snug Tier). I was also mildly surprised to see *Elsothera ricei*, usually a log-dweller, in screes around 850 metres altitude, the highest I have seen it on the Mountain, and Anna found a live *Caryodes dufresnii* that had plugged itself vertically into the ground between rocks in mid-track!

Full snail species list:

- *Prolesophanta dyeri*,
- "*Allocharopa legrandi*",
- *Roblinella agnewi*,
- *Caryodes dufresnii*,
- *Trocholaoma parvissima*,
- *Planilaoma luckmanii*,
- *Elsothera ricei*,
- *Tasmaphena sinclairi*,
- "*Allocharopa*" sp "Wellington",
- *Pernagera architectonica*,
- *Mulathena fordei*

Unbeknown to the rest of us at the time, we had an extra member on our excursion! Lynne started an hour behind us, didn't spot us in the hollow of the tarn at lunchtime, and finished back at the carpark before us. Never-the-less she enjoyed herself and had a productive time, as she reports below...

Beetles & Spiders [Lynne Forster]

The following are beetles I found were familiar to me, as I have done a lot of surveying of Mt Wellington beetles; most are also common elsewhere in Tassie. I could see very little under the jumbled scree rocks. The beetles I did observe were under rocks of approx 30cm diameter flat on the ground, unless otherwise noted, and the totals are for the excursion, not just under one rock.

Beetles

Carabidae:

- *Chylnus ater* 15mm
- *Hypharpax spp.* 8mm (not the usual H. australasiae or H. peronii)
- *Notonomus politulus* 16mm (23 sighted)
- *Promecoderus longus* 11mm (3 sighted)
- *Scopodes boops* 6mm on silvery dry logs on scree in drier forest (4 sighted)
- *Sloaneana tasmaniae* 5mm

Tenebrionidae:

- *Adelium abbreviatum* 11mm (18 sighted)
- *Adelium sp.* 13mm (7 sighted)
- *Coripera deplanata* 10mm (9 sighted)

Lucanidae (stag beetles):

- *Lissotes obtusatus* (Lucanidae) (2 sighted)

Spiders

- (Amaurobiidae) 17mm
- *Novodamus nodatus* (Nicodaemidae) 5.5mm (8 sighted)
- *Litodamus hickmani* (Nicodaemidae) 5mm under rotting wood (27 sighted)

Pygmy possum nest-box project

Progress report, October 2007, by Don Hird

http://tasfieldnats.org.au/PygmyPossum/NestBoxes.htm provides a general outline of this project. This Progress Report describes the current implementations of nest-boxes, and some plans for further deployments.

Four main study areas have been established. These represent a range of habitat types in south-eastern Tasmania as follows.

Wet forest is represented at two sites. The Warra Long Term Ecological Research area (http://www.warra.com/warra/) is in the southern forests a short distance across the Huon River from the Tahune Airwalk tourism facility. This area has been extensively studied and is known as habitat for the two species of pygmy possums found in Tasmania. Dominant trees are very large *Eucalyptus obliqua* with an understorey comprised of rainforest trees and shrubs and copious cutting grass. This particular study area has a nest-box deployment pattern designed to test the efficacy of "retained aggregates" of trees in clearfell coupes, with replicated numbers of nest-boxes in both retained aggregates and pseudoaggregates in nearby control coupes of intact forest. Ninety six nest-boxes are in place at Warra. The second wet forest area is in the vicinity of Mount Mangana, Bruny Island, a habitat dominated by *Nothofagus cunninghamii* and other rainforest species with occasional Eucalypts. This area is checked by Tonia Cochrane of *Inala Nature Tours* and has been established partly based on a chance sighting of a little pygmy possum foraging in daylight on a *Richea dracophyllum* blossom. Ten nest-boxes are in place with a similar number of further deployments planned. Also planned for wet-forest are ten nest-boxes in wet forest with abundant Leatherwood (*Eucryphia lucida),* and thus a seasonally rich supply of nectar and pollen, in the Tahune Airwalk vicinity.

Coastal and intermediate habitats are represented in two main areas at present. Further to the wet-forest areas on Bruny are 15 nest-boxes currently deployed in dryer coastal forests and tall heathlands. Blue-gum habitat with its seasonally rich supply of nectar and pollen is of interest and may be investigated further. On Tasman Peninsula twenty five nest-boxes are deployed.

Dryer forest habitats are being investigated in the Mount Morrison forestry district NE of Hobart where twenty eight nest-boxes are now in place.

Deployment commenced in January 2007 and thus far approximately 180 nest-boxes are in place, as described above. Checking commenced in April 2007 but no vertebrates have yet been found in nest-boxes. Some practical issues involving better waterproofing of nest-boxes and more suitable methods of fixing the lids are being addressed. Other developments arising from this project involve various records of pygmy possums being reported, some of which may lead to further investigation using nest-boxes, or possibly other devices such as automated cameras.

Spring Federation Get-together

This is a chance to go a bit further afield and to meet members of other field naturalist groups from around the State. The weekend outing will be hosted by the Launceston Field Naturalists Club on 16~18th November at Bicheno. Plans are for field trips to *Winifred Curtis Reserve* and *Douglas Apsley Park.*

Accommodation for Friday and Saturday nights will be in the Seaview Holiday Park, Banksia St, Bicheno. Seaview [www.seaviewaccom.bigpondhosting.com] offers a wide range of accommodation: from tent-sites, caravan sites, bunk-rooms, to cabins and motel rooms.

Please contact Janet Fenton (phone 6239 6443 or email fenton@southcom.com.au) if you are interested in attending. She will then forward the accommodation details to you.

Waverly Flora Park

Excursion, 6 Oct 2007 - report by Anna McEldowney

Waverley Flora park is so close to the city and yet several of us on the October outing had never been there. On the hill above Bellerive, much of the area is a good example of a remnant of grassy woodland, having survived the ravages of fire (which is now used as a management tool), rubbish and plant waste dumping, quarrying for sandstone and feral animals.

Mark Wapstra had heard reports that the Spider Orchid, *Caladenia caudata,* was flowering so with that in mind seven of us set off in search. The track is about 2.8km long and should take about an hour but in true Field Nats style it took us 1½ hours to cover about 600 metres! We were rewarded by finding many of the plants on the plant species list for the park, including *C. caudata.* Only those plants which were flowering (or very nearly flowering) are listed below. This is a destination well worth visiting again - it makes an interesting half-day outing, especially at this time of the year.

Plants flowering:

Bossiaea cinerea
Dianella breviculmis
Dianella revoluta
Comesperma volubile
Thysanotus patersonii
Lissanthe strigosa
Dillwynia glaberrima
Plantago varia
Pimelea humilis
Diuris sulphurea
Anagallis arvensis var. *coerulea*
Asperula conferta
Bulbine glauca
Diplarrena moraea
Carpobrotus rossii
Leptorhynchos nitidulus
Wurmbea dioica
Kennedia prostrata
Hibbertia riparia
Caladenia caudata
Luzula flaccida
Leucopogon virgatus
Stackhousia monogyna
Craspedia glauca
Austrostipa mollis
Chrysocephalum apiculatum
Pterostylis pedunculata
Helichrysum scorpioides

Birds sighted:

Little wattlebird
Forest Raven
Black-faced cuckoo shrike
Currawong
Silvereye
Yellow-throated honeyeater

Invertebate report [Lynne Forster]

Searching was mainly restricted to a recently burnt patch near the northern park entrance.

- scorpions under rocks - *Cercophonius squama*
- iridescent green moth (Satin green forester) – *Pollanisus viridipulverulenta* (Zygaenidae), a day flying moth that releases prussic acid for defence.
- Huntsmen spiders - *Delena cancerides*, a cluster of about 50 individuals ¾ grown were under a large rock sitting on another rock; the young usually stay with their mother until well developed.
- several tiny golden jumping chrysomelids - *Chaetocnema* TFIC sp 01 (Galerucinae), (2mm) on regrowth *Acacia dealbata*, they have enormous 'inflated' femurs to enable them to jump.
- tiny metallic beetles alongside the chyrsomelids on the regrowing *Acacia dealbata.*
- several long bodied spiders among sparse tussocks in the moist sand - *Argiope sp.*
- we lunched next to a nest of large sugar ants - *Camponotus consobrinus* (Formicidae: Myrmicinae).
- iridescent beetles (15mm) feeding on yellow *Crasspedia glauca.*

It was noticeable that large predatory ground beetles were absent. They had probably been replaced by the diverse fauna of ants that were thriving in the dry bare ground devoid of litter to keep it moist. There was also no litter or soft rolls of bark to harbour the usual spiders such as the usually ubiquitous dark blue and orange Nicodamidae species. At the edge where there was ground litter and grass, other species including ground beetles appeared:

- *Chylnus ater* (Carabidae) - found singly under logs
- *Adelium abbreviatum* (Tenebrionidae) - in clusters under logs
- a mating pair of *Gonipterus scutellatus* weevils (Curculionidae) on a young eucalypt as well as egg pods of this species on leaves.
- orange patterned butterflies - *Geitonera klugii* (Nymphalidae), caterpillars eat native grasses.
- big woolly caterpillar on the ground looking for a place to pupate - *Anthela nicothoe* (Anthelidae).

- black caterpillar with a red stripe and two long tufts of hairs (Arctiidae).
- ladybird - *Harmonia conformis* on *Bursaria.*
- a spider with spots on its abdomen and red legs, in rolled bark on the ground *Storena sp.* (Zodariidae) a family of spiders known to mimic ants.

Michael Driessen later identified two grasshoppers from photographs. Both grasshoppers are in the family Acrididae:

- the black grasshopper is most likely the Variable Cirphula, *Cirphula pyrrhocnemis* (nymph)
- the other (pictured) is the Gumleaf hopper, *Goniaea australasiae* (nymph).

Jewel beetle book reprint— out now!

Due to popular demand TFNC decided to reprint this handy little book with colour photos and descriptions of all Tasmania's jewel beetles. It covers biology, life cycles, behaviour, food-plants, distribution, conservation, and classification.

Contact our treasurer Anna McEldowney to buy this or any of our books— phone (03) 6239 6326 or email Anna.McEldowney@utas.edu.au

A Century Afield	$30 each
Butterflies of Tasmania	$16 each
Jewel Beetles of Tasmania	$12 each
The Tasmanian Naturalist (back copies, if available)	$15 each
Post & Pack (any number of books)	Australia $5 O/seas $15

The Tasmanian Naturalist - update

Mark Wapstra, Editor, The Tasmanian Nauralist

My apologies that Volume 129 (2007) will not be mailed with this edition of the Bulletin. I hope to have it delivered to you by mid November.

But just a quick tempter for you. This edition will include several submitted articles on a diverse set of topics including "mudguts" (you'll have to wait to read about that but it's not about those of us carrying a little too much around the middle!), iceplants, terrestrial and shoreline snails, greenhood orchids (a strange tale of the dangers posed by a nasty little mite!), devils and hollow-nesting birds. And we also have several extended book reviews.

All in all, I hope this to be an interesting edition and on your shelves as soon as possible.

E**xcursion photos** can be seen at http://www.tasfieldnats.org.au/ExcnPhotos/ExcnPhotos.htm.